

14. REAPPEARANCE OF *ANSER INDICUS* (LATHAM) AND *TADORNA TADORNA* (LINNAEUS) IN KUTCH, GUJARAT

One of the authors of this note (NNB) saw three Barheaded Geese on 6 November 1987 at the Rudramata Dam, about 14 Km. north of Bhuj, Gujarat. When both of us went there the next day and on the 8th along with the other members of the Pelican Nature Club of Kutch, the geese were still there. *Anser indicus* has always been a very rare cold weather visitor to Kutch, Saurashtra and the other parts of Gujarat. Even in earlier years, when *Anser anser* used to come regularly (they stopped coming over fifty years ago), the barhead hardly ever came this way (Vijayarajji, *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc* 21: 678). So it is perhaps after over half a century that this goose has been seen here.

After three years of scarcity of rain, this season we have had a total failure of the monsoon rain. Consequently, except for two or three irrigation dams which have some water in them, all the other lakes, reservoirs and village tanks are empty, or in the process of drying up. In the Rudramata Dam itself the level of water is quite low. As it recedes, part of the dam bed is ploughed, and Sorghum *Panicum* sp. sown, which is at various stages of growth in the wet silt that tends to remain moist for quite some time. The geese do not fly anywhere to feed, as they usually do,

but just waddle over to any one of the cultivated plots of their choice and start feeding!

On November 13th, NNB saw one Common Shelduck at the dam. This duck is also rare in this part of the country. The first record of its occurrence in Kutch was that of one Col. C.B. Obrien in 1921. The second was by Maharao Madansinhji, who saw two of these ducks in a small pool of water in the coastal sand dunes about 10 Rm. west of Mandvi on 4 December 1966. He collected one specimen (sex not known). Thus the recent sighting of *Tadorna tadorna* comes after an interval of 21 years.

As with Kutch, neighbouring areas of Sind (Pakistan) to the north and some districts of Rajasthan to the northeast are also experiencing drought conditions, as a result of which these waterfowl seem to have strayed into Kutch. The Common Shelduck, according to the 'HANDBOOK' (Ali & Ripley), is known to visit parts of Sind regularly during recent years.

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15. PARIAH KITE *MILVUS MIGRANS* CAPTURING WHITEBREASTED KINGFISHER *HALCYON SMYRNEUSIS*

A commotion was created when a Pariah Kite *Milvus migrans* captured a Whitebreasted Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis* in the JIPMER (Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research) campus in Pondicherry one June afternoon.

A number of Pariah Kites have taken up residence on top of the three storey JIPMER building and adjoining places, possibly attracted by the Central Animal House nearby, where laboratory animals are being bred. On this particular afternoon four kites were seen flying about frantically, with a dozen or so noisy house crows in hot pursuit. One of the kites flying overhead at a low level had a Whitebreasted Kingfisher firmly in its talons. The kingfisher's cries of agony were clearly audible. The

commotion died down after about 2 minutes, when the kite managed to escape with its prey.

The kite had to face two problems after grabbing the kingfisher: avoiding the crows excited by this act of capture by the kite, and preventing the other kites from forcibly taking possession of the kingfisher.

It is not known when, where and how the kite caught the kingfisher. Whitebreasted Kingfishers are very commonly seen in this locality. Pariah Kites are known to lift poultry, and have also been reported to capture bats (Ali & Ripley 1983).

June 26, 1987.

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REFERENCE

ALI, S. & RIPLEY, S.D. (1983): Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan. Compact edition. Oxford University Press,

Delhi.